September 10, 2008

To: County Health Officer
   Public Health Nurse
   Local Health Department Administrator

Within your community, the local health department is the public health leader. As you already know, your role is becoming ever more crucial as numerous potential public health problems are looming for your community members and their families. Your guidance, expertise, and multiple links are essential to combat these challenges.

One of the least understood and most challenging, and prevalent public health issues is sexual violence and its impact upon the social health of your community. The enclosed fact sheets define the issues and challenges.

We are asking you to begin taking steps with other communities throughout Indiana to develop a statewide primary prevention plan focusing on preventing initial perpetration and victimization of sexual violence. *"Primary prevention" means taking steps to stop sexual violence before it happens by supporting positive beliefs and behaviors about healthy relationships, respect, and gender equality.*

In cooperation with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) Program, and the State Sexual Violence Primary Prevention Council, we are facilitating a series of ten regional meetings for the purpose gathering input and testimony from the many segments of your community. This sexual violence prevention needs and resources assessment will help to develop the State Sexual Violence Primary Prevention Plan. **One local health department in your region is being asked to co-host the meeting, but all of Indiana's local health departments are receiving this invitation to participate in the meeting.**

By this point you probably have at least two questions: 1) What is being asked of your department in regards to time commitment and resources? 2) How might your health department and community benefit from this effort?

To address the first question regarding your time commitment to this effort:

- Plan to attend the regional meetings with a community team;

- Identify and invite representatives from your community to attend the regional meeting **(a list of potential invitees and meeting dates and locations will be posted on Sharepoint and an email will be sent to alert you that it has been posted)**;

- Solicit input from community members using a survey that will be **posted on Sharepoint ;**
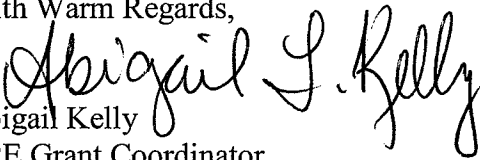
- Bring the survey responses to the regional meeting;

- Remain in contact with the state leadership, Abby Kelly and facilitators Pam Robbins and Juanita Russell, by providing your input, questions, and progress, and;

- Participate in a conference call **(date to be announced on Sharepoint)** to hear more details and ask questions.

To address the second question: How will the local health department benefit by joining this effort?

- By providing leadership and demonstrating knowledge about this public health issue, you will be working to protect and strengthen children and families.

- By cooperating with any existing organizations and agencies who are already working on this and related issues, you will be strengthening efforts through your knowledge, leadership, and resources.

- By framing this as a public health issue, you help to unify and define workable solutions in regards to the systems and organizations within your community.

- By being part of the state plan and utilizing the knowledge and resources of state and national sources, you will have an opportunity to have your voice heard as we work to reduce the negative impact of sexual violence in our state.

Please take time to review this packet of information. It will answer many of your questions. For more information, contact Pam Robbins at probbins@wcrtc.net or Juanita Russell at nita.russell@comcast.net. We look forward to working with you, gathering your input, and meeting you at the regional meetings.

With Warm Regards,

Abigail Kelly
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